

Group Presentations on Japanese Culture

INR 3223 — Spring 2004

Each group of approximately 4 members (5 maximum) should identify one element of Japanese or American national identity, society, or culture and explore its impact on US-Japan relations. The presentation will consist of two parts: (1) an in-class presentation of about 10 minutes, and (2) a report to which each team member contributes 2 pages (maximum).

The presentation will be evaluated collectively, and may be conducted by one, several, or all of the group members. It should give examples of the phenomenon under discussion and should make a clear argument about its effects. It may be helpful to include audio-visual materials in the presentation where appropriate. There will be a brief question-and-answer session after each presentation.

The report should begin with a table of contents that clearly identifies the topic of each team-member's essays. The essays will be graded individually, but part of the group presentation grade will also depend on how well the essays work together to make a coherent argument. Each team should also bring a 1-page handout (including bibliography) to be distributed to all class members. All written work should be typed and double-spaced (the outline may be single-spaced). Each group report should be stapled together, following the order of its table of contents, and should not be placed in a folder or binder (I'm interested in your ideas, not in how they're bound together).

Finally, remember that it is mandatory that all class members attend all of the presentations (not only those on the day when your team is presenting).

Possible topics include:

- Compensation to WWII "comfort women"
- Yasukuni shrine
- The truth & symbolism of the Nanking Massacre
- The "history" problem and Japan's relations with E. Asia
- Food and Japanese identity
- Japan and the practice of whaling
- The impact of Japanese pop culture: Hello Kitty, Pokemon, and beyond
- Japan as a "normal" or "unique" country; American exceptionalism
- Japan "that can say no"
- Political corruption, the Yakuza, and Sokaiya
- Is Japan's political system culturally distinctive?
- Are Japan's economic practices culturally distinctive?
- Japanese culture and democracy
- Do Japanese policies reflect "Asian values?"
- Do American policies reflect "Western" or "Protestant values?"
- Do Japanese policies reflect hierarchical or Confucian values?
- Japan and "orientalism": East or West?
- Race and Japan's (or the United States') foreign relations
- Religion and Japan's (or the United States') foreign relations
- What is Japan's proper role in the UN?

Finally, remember that **all material that is not original must be fully and properly cited. Consult my website for a guide to proper citation formats.**